

Frequently Asked Questions

Safer at Home West Virginia

West Virginia's success at slowing the spread of COVID-19 means the "Stay at Home" order issued March 23 is **being replaced** with a new Executive Order from Gov. Justice, "**Safer at Home.**"

What does this mean?

- West Virginians are still ***strongly encouraged*** to leave home only for essential activities.
- Staying at home remains ***critically important*** for seniors, people with compromised immune systems, and other vulnerable populations.
- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has come into contact with someone with COVID-19 should ***stay at home*** as well.
- Businesses defined as non-essential can start re-opening by category, according to the schedule set by West Virginia Strong-The Comeback (/Pages/The-Comeback.aspx).
- Gatherings **are still limited to 24 people**, with certain exceptions such as religious services.
- Social distancing is **strongly encouraged**, and **required** in certain settings.

- Wearing a CDC-recommended mask or face covering is **strongly encouraged**, and **required** in certain settings.

Questions and Answers about “Safer at Home”

Q: When does the Safer at Home executive order take effect?

A: Gov. Justice’s order is effective **12:01 a.m. Monday, May 4**. It amends, ends or replaces several earlier executive orders including the March 23 “Stay at Home” order.

Q: How is “Safer than Home” different from the previous “Stay at Home” order?

A: This new order replaces the “Stay at Home” mandate. It allows West Virginians to leave their homes, **but** strongly encourages them to stay at home unless:

- Obtaining food, medicine or other essential goods
- Obtaining medical care
- Going to a job already defined as essential or covered by this new order (see below)
- Visiting family or abiding by a child visitation agreement
- Going to a place of worship
- Engaging in outdoor activities that adhere to social distancing and crowd size rules.

Individuals **strongly encouraged to stay at home** include:

- Seniors
- Those with compromised immune systems
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19
- Anyone exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Any other populations considered vulnerable to COVID-19

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Q: What businesses can now re-open?

A: This order takes effect at the same time that **Week 2** of the state's re-opening plan, West Virginia Strong-The Comeback (/Pages/The-Comeback.aspx), begins. **Special rules or guidance apply for some of those businesses or activities covered by this phase.**

During Week 2, these establishments or activities are allowed (*but not required*) to open:

- Restaurants with **outdoor dining** or **takeaway service** available
- Barbershops, and hair and nail salons
 - "Safer at Home" **ends** the March 19 order that closed these businesses
 - **By appointment only**
 - Appointments must be scheduled to **allow cleaning in between**

- Customers must wait in vehicles **or otherwise not** in the establishment
- **All staff and employees must wear masks**
- Pet groomers and other professional services
 - **By appointment only**
 - Appointments must be scheduled to **allow cleaning in between**
 - Customers or clients must wait in vehicles or otherwise **not inside**
- **In-person services** at funeral homes and places of worship
 - Seating should be spaced to ensure social distancing
 - The wearing of face coverings is **strongly encouraged**
- Small retail businesses (10 or fewer employees; 50 or fewer customers per day); examples include:
 - Jewelry and flower shops
 - Sporting goods, uniform and equipment stores
 - Clothing, shoe and furniture stores
 - **Eligible small businesses must ensure proper hygiene practices and social distancing, including limiting any customer occupancy to two individuals for every 1,000 square feet of interior space**
 - **If located in a mall, such businesses must have a direct outdoor entrance and exit**
- Home-based businesses can continue to operate, with any employees working from their own residences.
- **All businesses** can continue to conduct the **minimum necessary activities** to:

- Maintain inventory
- Preserve working condition of physical plant and equipment
- Process payroll and employee benefits
- Secure buildings, grounds and other property

Additional categories of businesses will be announced and explained in detail in coming days and weeks.

Q: What remains closed?

A: Indoor and outdoor entertainment and social venues remain closed under the Safer at Home order, given the risk to proper social distancing. **Businesses and establishments that are still closed include:**

- Social clubs, pool halls, bingo halls, adult entertainment venues
- Arcades, playgrounds, children's play centers
- Movies and other theaters, concert halls
- Museums, zoos, carnivals, fairs, amusement parks and venues
- Bowling alleys, casinos and racetracks (**except** for simulcast horse racing without spectators **no sooner than May 14**)
- Shopping malls
 - Small businesses in such places that are eligible to re-

open in such places must have a direct outdoor entrance and exit.

Q: If my employer re-opens, am I required to return to work?

A: Workers temporarily laid off because of COVID-19 must return to work if they are called back ***if they wish to remain eligible for unemployment benefits***. Refusing to return to a job when there is available work and continuing to file unemployment claims can be considered fraud and potentially disqualify an individual from receiving benefits.

WorkForce West Virginia (<https://workforcewv.org/>) is providing information and resources for both workers and employers.

Q: What if my employer re-opens, but I am among those strongly encouraged to remain at home because of an underlying health condition or family/living situation?

A: Employees should communicate their situations clearly to employers, and seek to discuss such options as working from home. Ultimately, workers who wish to remain eligible for unemployment benefits must return to work if they are called back.

Workers who quit a job without good cause are not eligible for unemployment benefits. If a workplace resumes operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, workers applying for

unemployment benefits may be required to provide supporting documentation when their claim is adjudicated.

WorkForce West Virginia (<https://workforcewv.org/>) has additional information and resources.

Q: What if my employer re-opens, but at reduced hours from what I normally worked?

A: Workers who are called back by their employer but work reduced hours may still qualify for unemployment benefits. These workers should continue to file weekly claims at [uc.workforcewv.org](https://uc.workforcewv.org/consumer/?lang=en) (<https://uc.workforcewv.org/consumer/?lang=en>) and report all earnings. If a worker is earning more than their previous weekly benefit amount, they will not be eligible for benefits that week.

Visit WorkForce West Virginia (<https://workforcewv.org/>) for additional information and resources.